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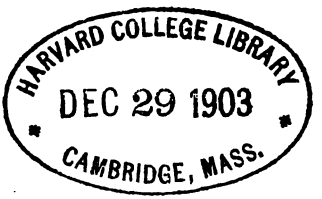

Henry William Poor,
N.Y. City.

New York, March 14, 1903.

My Dear Poor:—

I am tremendously flattered at the thought that you are to make a separate catalogue of my books. I have brought them together with a great deal of pleasure, have lived with them and loved them. I have endeavoured from time to time, to make them more interesting and valuable by adding documents, prints, autograph, letters—when possible I have secured a volume which is unique. By a "unique book" I mean one which can not under any circumstances be duplicated. The mere insertion of autograph letters or portraits does not seem to me enough to render a book worthy of the title—unique. But the original drawings of the illustrator of the book, or a series of drawings made especially for it and inserted must stamp it as the only one of its kind. Another feature which I have tried to carry out is the historical interest (to a book-lover) of the volume itself. It seems to me a decided attraction to a book that it has stood on the shelves of one of the bibliophile epicures of the time past. The men who were the patrons of the writers, printers and bookbinders, choose for themselves the best, and the knowledge that such a volume figured in their catalogue, bears on the fly leaf their book-plates and has since belonged to other collectors of note, marks it as being worth having. To know that a book, bound by a master binder has belonged in turn to Mme. de Pompadour, Pixérécourt, Jéméniz, MacCarthy, and then later on to Didot or Renouard, and in our day to such critical collectors as Quentin-Bauchart, Paillet, LaRoche LaCarelle, or Portalis, means much. It is a historical document with a title of nobility justly earned.

It is a pleasure to know that you will keep them

together in one case, alongside of each other. I have kept them so long and so closely together that it seems to me as if they would mourn if separated. I love to cherish the fancy that my favorite authors with their Heroes and Heroines and the owners, too, of the books they cherished so fondly, left something of their personalities between the leaves and in the binding; and that at some quiet midnight hour, they would walk out and flock together and talk matters over, discuss the failings and foibles of their present owner, the comforts or discomforts of their abiding place. Imagine LaRochefoucauld and Dibdin, Balzac and Gautier bowing to Manon Lescaut and Mlle. de Maupin—"Saluons! C'est l'amour qui passe!" Henri Murger and De Musset bandying more or less old time jokes with Mme. Cardinal and in their hearts sorrowing for the disappeared grisette—Eugénie Grandet serious and sad listening to Merimée—or aroused to tears of laughter by Willette's Pierrot—the poet artist, thoughtful, mischievous, witty!

Yes, I am glad you will keep them together, thank you for that, and again for the compliment you have paid me.

Faithfully yours,
V. A. B.

To Henry W. Poor,
1 Lexington Avenue
New York

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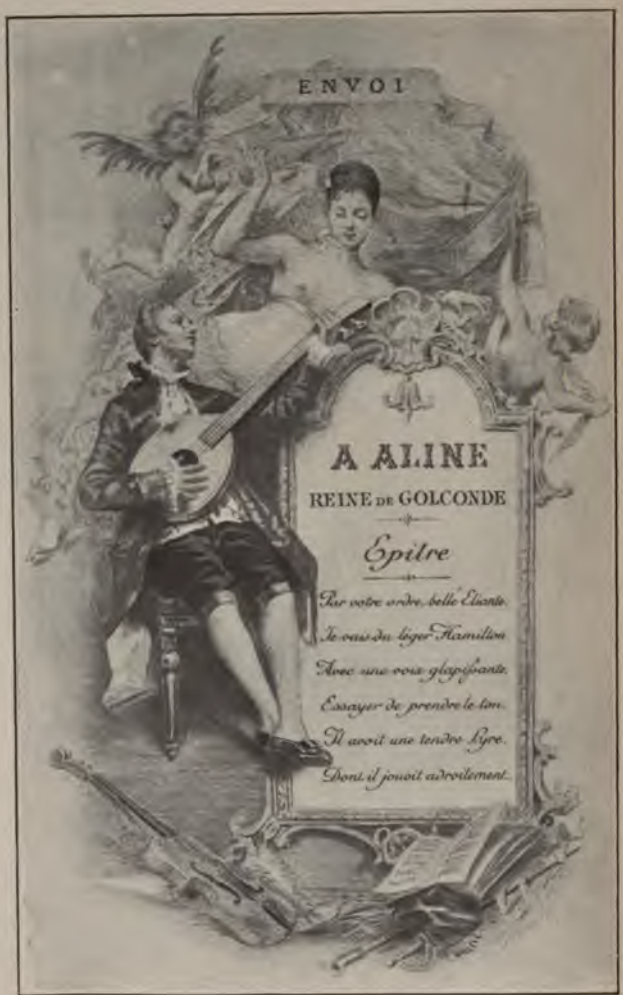
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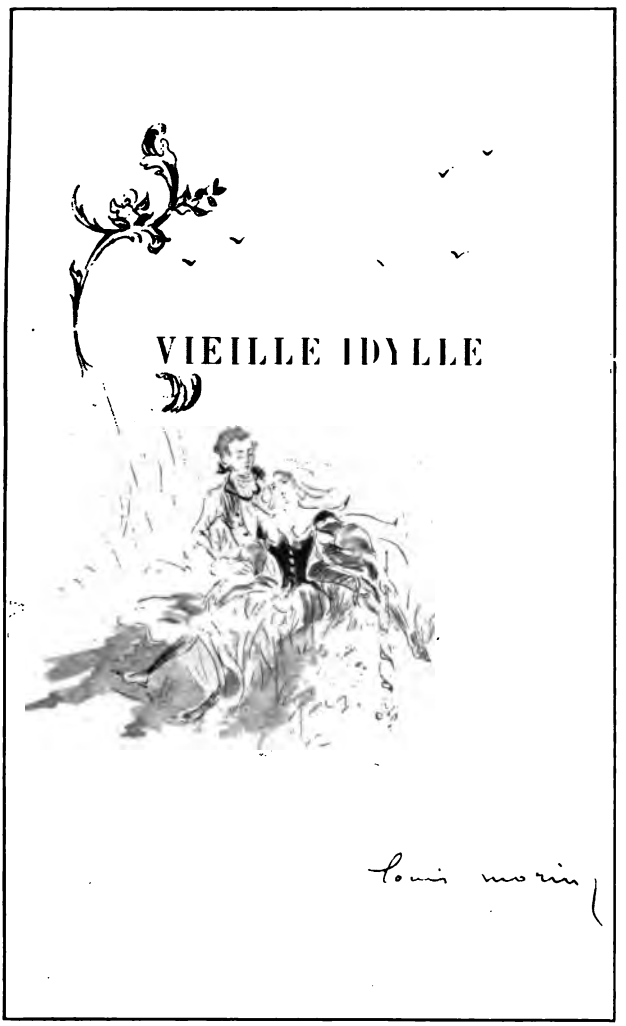

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ORIGINAL WATER COLOR DRAWING BY LOUIS MORIN

Première lettre.

Mon cher comte,

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1

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A. Pivagnel

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